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EFFECTS OF A METHOD OF TEACHING SENTENCE STRUCTURE UPON SENTENCE STRUCTURE USED IN WRITING.

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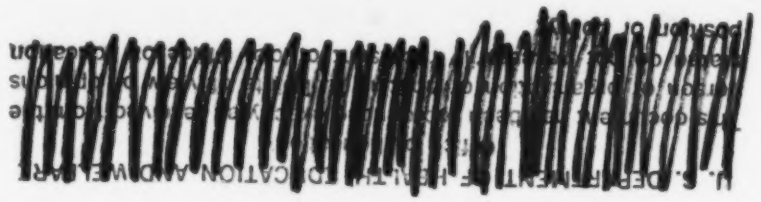
THIS STUDY CONCERNED THE TEACHING OF WRITING TO COLLEGE FRESHMEN WITHOUT THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR. THE MEASUREMENT WAS OF SENTENCE MATURITY, DEFINED AS THE NUMBER OF INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS, INTERRUPTING ELEMENTS, AFTER THOUGHTS, AND PARALLEL STRUCTURES USED BY THE STUDENTS AFTER THE TEACHING COMPARED TO THE NUMBER OF THESE ELEMENTS USED BEFORE THE TEACHING. THE EXPERIMENTAL METHOD WAS ADMINISTERED TO 10 RANDOMLY COMPRISED GROUPS OF COLLEGE FRESHMEN. TEN RANDOMLY COMPRISED GROUPS OF A SIMILAR SIZE WERE TAUGHT IN THE TRADITIONAL METHOD. SOME OF THE CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE STUDY WERE--(1) A PROGRAM OF CONSISTENT SELF-ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE STRUCTURE CAN INCREASE THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH A VARIETY OF ELEMENTS ARE USED IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION BY COLLEGE FRESHMEN, (2) THE EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE SEEMED USEFUL TO SLIGHTLY MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE INSTRUCTORS, (3) ATTEMPTS TO CREATE A GENERAL IMPROVEMENT IN WRITING SKILLS HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL, (4) THE CRITERION MEASURE FOR ASSESSING SENTENCE MATURITY MAY HAVE BEEN TOO GROSS. SEVERAL IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY ARE PRESENTED. (JC)



EFFECTS OF A METHOD OF TEACHING SENTENCE STRUCTURE UPON SENTENCE STRUCTURE USED IN WRITING

Cooperative Research Project No. S-092

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Foreword

General concern for an improvement in the teaching of English is reflected by the number of conferences dedicated to an examination and evaluation of all phases of English teaching. Among these conferences several were devoted to analyzing the areas where research may be needed. The Allerton Park Conference, the Carnegie Institute of Technology Conference, and the Research Development Seminar in the Teaching of English were especially concerned with the potential value of research in the improvement of English teaching. In the report of the latter published by the U.S. Office of Education, two problems in applied research were mentioned:

> Studies of the relationship between the teaching of grammar and improvement in writing, e. g., the direct teaching of grammar as an aid to writing, the teaching of grammar as a humanistic subject without direct connection with writing, and the teaching of writing without any teaching of grammar.
>
> A study of the effectiveness of different types of teaching approaches to grammar, e. g., inductive and deductive, for pupils of different levels of mental ability. [1]

This study has been concerned with the teaching of writing to college freshmen without the teaching of grammar. The measurement was of sentence maturity, defined as the number of introductory elements, interrupting elements, afterthoughts, and parallel structures used by the students after the teaching as compared to the number of these elements used before the teaching. Since the inductive method of teaching was used, this study is directly concerned with the two problems quoted above.

It is not possible that a single research effort can formulate from its findings a general framework around which could be constructed the optimal instructional program for the college student in this area.

[1] Louise M. Rosenblatt, Research Development Seminar in the Teaching of English, G-009 (Washington, D.C. : Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare), p. 35.

Many fragmentary studies will be necessary to provide the pool from which an ultimate method or methods may some day be evolved. It is hoped that in some way the results of this study will contribute to the direction and ultimate refinement of instruction in written composition at the college level.

Chapter I

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of an experimental method of teaching the use of sentence structure to college freshmen.

The specific criterion used is the variety in sentence structure in the subject's writing sample.

The experimental treatment or instructional method used is one which is the product of 15 years of experimental development. A pilot study--designed to help affirm the belief that the experimental method did, with greater economy, elicit improvement equal to, or superior to, a more traditional method of instruction in written composition--was conducted in 1962-63 with a limited sample, 60 randomly selected and assigned students enrolled in two experimental and two control groups at the Kansas State College. Two instructors, each using both types of teaching methods, administered the treatments for a period of 14 class periods.

In addition to a larger sample, this study has the advantage, over the pilot effort, of having better controlled experimental conditions and of using ten teachers instead of two.

After the encouraging findings from the pilot study, which suggested the positive effectiveness of the experimental method, this larger study was conceived and conducted.

Four basic assumptions are advanced to support the logic of this study and particularly to justify the criterion measure.

1. A functional knowledge of sentence structure is dependent upon the quality of the student's perception of sentence structure.
2. "Although the subjects vary little in their use of the basic structural patterns of English, those high in language ability showed much greater dexterity in varying the elements within these patterns."[1]

[1]Walter Loban, The Language of Elementary School Children (Champaign, Ill. : National Council of Teachers of English, 1963), p. 68.

3. "Not pattern but what is done to achieve flexibility within the pattern proves to be a measure of effectiveness and control of language at this level of development."[2]

4. A specific instructional procedure can be designed that should improve the quality of the college student's perception and should, therefore, help him to achieve a greater dexterity in varying the elements within his sentences.

The procedure used in this study for teaching the use of sentence structure attempts to give the students a context of the meaning of sentence structures in communication, a set of principles to which they may relate their observations and by which they may evaluate the effect of what they observe, and an understanding which enables them to choose purposefully their own sentence structures as they develop flexibility of sentence structure in their own writing.

If such a change can be effected in the writing of college students, this study should be of significant value in the teaching of composition.

Significance to Education of an Improved Method of Instruction in College Composition

Many studies offer evidence that the study of grammar does not result in better sentences in the writing of students. A conclusion suggested by these studies is that some direct technique or procedure is needed for the teaching of sentence structure to enable the student to utilize his knowledge about sentence structure in his writing.

Recent reports on the state of research in English emphasize the fact that so far this problem has not been solved.

Burton states:

> Finally, a research gap . . . exists in an old battle area--the relation of direct teaching of language structure to ability in oral and written expression . . . . Numerous studies have yielded low correlations between scores on

[2]Loban, p. 84.

> grammar or usage tests and ratings on themes . . . . The many-headed problem remains: In what ways and with what students does what type of analysis of English sentences affect writing or speaking? . . . A few experimental studies . . . have compared the effects of structural linguistics and traditional grammar . . . . No difference in effect on writing, however, has been demonstrated.[3]

To the same point, Martin says of research in composition: "My colleague, John Carroll, speaks glumly of such research after years spent in reading and analysis. A document prepared by Richard Braddock, of Iowa, does not give me ground for feeling any cheerier than Carroll does."[4]

Both men suggest that a new approach to the problem may be needed. Burton states:

> Among us, we may be able to devise a curriculum and revise our teaching to enable students earlier to apprehend the structure of our discipline or disciplines, so that they will understand better--have a context into which they can fit new learning, a set of principles they can apply to new particulars, and an understanding that lessens the gap between 'elementary' and 'advanced' knowledge which always plagues our teaching.[5]

Martin suggests that a new approach dealing "not with the conditions surrounding the compositional act but with the materials of that act" might produce better results.[6]

[3]Dwight L. Burton, "Some Important Research Gaps in the Teaching of Secondary School English," in Needed Research in the Teaching of English, OE 30010 (Washington, D. C. : U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1963), pp. 18-19.

[4]Harold C. Martin, Proceedings of the Allerton Park Conference on Research in Teaching English, OE 310058 (Washington, D.C. in Cooperation with the University of Illinois, 1962), p. 54.

[5]Burton, p. 23.

[6]Martin, p. 57.

Chapter II

Related Literature

The basic rationale for the proposed study is expressed in the book of Robert C. Pooley which provided the theory for the development of the specific procedure to be used:

> Because subordination and parallel structure play such an important part in the syntax of modern English, the teaching of writing must lay stress upon the means by which each is accomplished. It is to these ends that the teaching of grammar should be directed. To use subordination and parallel syntax the student will need to know the names of the kinds of structures available to him and how they are formed. This kind of instruction is truly grammar; these outcomes are the reasons for teaching grammar; and the success of students in creating condensed, interesting sentences is the measure of success in such instruction.[1]

The measurement chart also devised for this study was suggested by LaBrant's "Subordination Index,"[2] although this chart has a structural approach.

Numerous recent studies mention Lou LaBrant's work as being significant. Burton refers to her study:

> A thorough collation of studies may be in order. At any rate, the question can be approached in one way through analyses of the written and oral language of children and adolescents. One such study--an analysis of structures, classified according to traditional grammar, used by children in grades 4 to 12--was published 30 years ago by Lou LaBrant. Unfortunately few similar and improved studies have been made since. Further longitudinal studies of language development will make an important contribution in answering this first question. Two such studies, sponsored by the Office of Education, are already in progress and are well known: one under the direction of Professor Walter Loban at the University of California; the other, under the direction of Professor Ruth Strickland at Indiana University.[3]

[1]Robert C. Pooley, Teaching English Grammar (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957), p. 102.

[2]Lou LaBrant, "A Study of Certain Language Developments of Children in Grades IV to XII, Inclusive," Genetic Psychology Monographs, XIV (November 1933), pp. 387-491.

[3]Burton, p. 15.

Conclusions made in each of the recent studies mentioned above reinforce the rationale of this study.

From the Strickland study, these conclusions were drawn:

> 1. The arrangements of sentence structures are fully as much carriers of meaning as are the words themselves. (p. 3)
>
> 2. Children at all grade levels could expand and elaborate their sentences through the use of movables and elements of subordination. (p. 102)
>
> 3. The value of this research resides mainly in the evidence it has produced regarding the patterns of linguistic structure commonly used by children and the tremendous flexibility with which children use these patterns in their oral language. It seems safe to say that children learn fairly thoroughly at an early age the basic structure of their language. (p. 106)[4]

Loban drew the following conclusions from his work:

> The most significant features to emerge from the work accomplished so far appear to be these: . . . Not basic sentence pattern but what is done to achieve flexibility within pattern proves to be a measure of proficiency with language at this level. Since formal instruction in grammar--whether linguistic or traditional--seems to be an ineffective method of improving expression at this level of development, one can conclude that elementary pupils need many opportunities to grapple with their own thought in situations where they have someone to whom they wish to communicate successfully. Instruction can best aid the pupils' expression when individuals or small groups with similar problems are helped to see how their own expression can be improved. This instruction would take the form of identifying elements which strengthen or weaken communication, increase or lower precision of thought, clarify or blur meanings. For the pupils the approach would usually be through models, meaning, and reasoning rather than through the application of rules. On the other hand, the teacher would need to be aware of the structural problems behind the semantic difficulties and would be guided by research in determining what to emphasize or to ignore. Inductive reasoning toward generalizations would be more frequently encouraged than deductive applications to sentences not of the pupils' own creating.[5]

[4]Ruth G. Strickland, "The Language of Elementary School Children: Its Relationship to the Language of Reading Textbooks and the Quality of Reading of Selected Children," Bulletin of the School of Education (Indiana University), XXXVIII.4 (July 1962).

[5]Loban, p. 88.

The specific procedure tested in this study is directly supported by the literature quoted above.

It is supported in theory because

1. The context into which the new learning will fit is an awareness of the structural approach to grammar.
2. The set of principles which the students can apply to new particulars is contained in the procedure used.
3. The understanding is a realization of how sentence structures are used to carry meaning.

By this procedure, the students learn how to fit their thoughts into these "carriers of meaning" or as one college freshman expressed it, "I always thought that sentence structure was imposed on thought, but now I see that the structure is part of the thought."

Chapter III

PROCEDURES

General Design of the Study

The results of this comparison-of-methods study were analyzed as a simple randomized design in which the effectiveness of two different instructional procedures was compared. The experimental method was administered to ten randomly comprised groups of college freshmen from the first-year-class population of a midwestern state college. The traditional method of instruction was administered to ten similar sized, randomly comprised, control groups from the same parent population. The teacher variable was partially controlled through counterbalancing. Each of the ten instructors administered one experimental and one control treatment to each of two groups. This counterbalancing was done with full knowledge that this in no way completely offset the differential impact of the instructor with respect to one treatment or another. This arrangement was used primarily as a means of studying the amenability of this procedure to use by instructors in college English.

Many ideas for the research design, technical controls and statistical treatment were obtained from two previous studies, one by Kincaid[1] in 1953 and another by Buxton[2] in 1958. Braddock's volume on research for the National Council for the Teachers of English[3] served as a guide to the investigator for making many of her decisions concerning both the logic and methodology of this study.

[1]Gerald Lloyd Kincaid, "Some Factors Affecting Variations in Quality of Students' Writing," Unpublished paper number 5922 (Michigan State University, 1953).

[2]Earl W. Buxton, "An Experiment to Test the Effects of Writing Frequency and Guided Practice Upon Students' Skill in Written Expression." Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation (Stanford University 1958).

[3]Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd Jones, and Lowell Schoer, Research in Written Composition (Champaign, Ill. : National Council of Teachers of English, 1963).

The Population

Kansas State College at Pittsburg, Kansas, is a state supported institution enrolling approximately 5,000 students. The primary mission of the college in past years has been to prepare teachers for the public schools. In more recent years, after the school assumed a dual function which included a liberal arts degree program, the proportion of the student body preparing to teach was considerably reduced. The Kansas State College freshman class of 1964-65, of slightly more than 700, is the parent population for this study. This group is described with respect to intellectual ability and effectiveness of English expression, two variables which are believed to be related to the criterion measure used in this investigation.

Table I

Means and Standard Deviations
for Freshman Class Sample at KSC at Pittsburg
and a National Norms Group the Scholastic Aptitude Test
and Cooperative English Test: Effectiveness of Expression

	School and College Ability Test		Cooperative English Test: English Expression	
	Kansas State College (Freshman) (N=552)	National Norm Group (Freshman) Level 1 Form B	Kansas State College (Freshman) (N=552)	National Sample Group (Freshman) Form 1 C
Mean	61.07	61.19	34.89	37.39
S.D.	13.75	18.39	7.44	11.02

A comparison of the means of the Kansas State College students and the national norms groups for each of the tests is presented in Table I. This comparison suggests that the population, from which the experimental and control groups for this study were drawn, is very similar to a national sample of college freshmen with respect to what the authors of this test, the School and College Ability Test, call "school learned abilities." From a very crude comparison, students in this study are, however, as a group, less capable in English effectiveness as measured by the Cooperative English Test: English Expression, Form 1B than a comparison group of college students who were administered Form 1C.

The Sample

A final total study sample, after normal annual attrition, of 470 remained for final analysis from the original sample of 500 selected at random from the entering freshmen class for the academic year. The freshman class for this study is defined as first year college students; no transfers or repeaters were included in the population from which the samples were drawn. All subjects were new-from-high-school students.

In the fall of 1964, at registration, 500 students from the enrolling freshmen group were randomly selected and assigned randomly to twenty classes of approximately 25 students each. As part of the enrollment procedure these 500 students were all administered the School and College Ability Test, Level 1, Form B, and the Cooperative English Test: English Expression, Form 1 B, 1960.

Selection and Assignment of Teachers

The 500 students in the total sample for the study were taught by ten regular college staff members. These teachers were each assigned, by a random method, one group which was to be taught by the experimental method, with which they were oriented in regular staff meetings, and one group to be taught by the more traditional approach to college level instruction in written composition.

The Teaching Procedures

The Experimental Method

The experimental procedure which was evaluated by this study may be used with either structural or traditional grammar because it is a teaching method designed to teach the use of sentence structure as opposed to a method designed to teach grammar. This procedure could be used with junior or senior high school students preceding the teaching of grammar of either type. For college students it suggests a method for synthesizing what has previously been learned about grammar.

The procedure tested is a framework for the observation of sentence structure. It is a method of sentence analysis by the student which has been developed by the investigator from the impetus of the research findings of Pooley, La Brant, Loban, and Strickland, each of whom has made independent contributions to the logic of this procedure.

Pooley suggested that an instructional procedure should deal primarily with subordination and parallel structure.[4] La Brant used subordination as measurement in sentence analysis.[5] Both Loban and Strickland expressed the need for the development of flexibility of sentence structure through the "use of movables and elements of subordination."[6] Strickland reported that students use "tremendous flexibility" in their oral linguistic patterns.[7] Their primary need from teachers of composition, therefore, is direction in recognizing, understanding, and refining these patterns they are already using, in order to develop their writing skills. (Although this research was conducted with elementary pupils, the teacher's task is similar at all levels.)

[4]Pooley, p. 102.

[5]La Brant, pp. 387-491.

[6]Loban, p. 88; Strickland, p. 106.

[7]Strickland, p. 102.

The experimental method can be described as a series of problems concerning the arrangement of elements in a sentence with the emphasis on subordination and parallel structures. The directions given to the teachers and two sample problems are included in Appendix A.

The Traditional Method

In the control group, the teachers were asked to use Chapter III, "Form and Flow of Sentences," from the text[8] which was used in all classes of freshman English, in place of the materials which had been prepared for the experimental groups. (Chapter III of the text was not to be used in the experimental groups.) Since Lamar uses the transformational approach to grammar[9] and since the teachers were inexperienced in research techniques, in some cases the teachers were unable to avoid using the insight gained from the use of the materials prepared for the experimental groups in their instruction of the control groups. Also, since in the beginning the attitudes of the teachers varied from neutral to openly skeptical, the final agreement was that they would use the text as they had formerly used a text and withhold from the control groups only the specific devices prepared for the experimental groups. Thus the difference in the two teaching methods was narrowed more than was intended in the original design, the advantage in favor of the control group.

At no time were the students informed that a study was in progress.

The Measurement of Sentence Maturity

The criterion measure for this study was the total number of specified elements--introductory elements, interrupters, afterthoughts, and parallel elements--used in the first 150 words of a subject's sample of written composition on an assigned topic. It was believed that a high frequency of these sentence elements represented maturity in the use of sentence structure in writing.

[8]Lavoisier Lamar, Pattern and Purpose in Writing (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963), pp. 131-185.

[9]Lamar, p. 150.

The criterion measure developed seemed subject to unreliability because of the "writer variable." The "writer variable" has been discussed by Braddock et al.: "Although it is obvious that the writer variable cannot be controlled, certain allowances can be made for it."[10] As an effort to minimize the unreliability of the criterion measure due to this factor, the students' growth in their use of sentence structures in their writing was measured on four separate samples of their writing. Two samples were obtained from each of the 500 students as pre-experiment measures in September 1964. One day of time intervened between the two assessment periods. A similar appraisal was made on two separate days, with again a one-day intervening period, in January 1965, at the conclusion of the treatment, or instructional period.

The topics for the four writing samples were all different and were especially selected with consideration for "the students' variation in intellectual maturity, knowledge, and socio-economic background."[11] They all were judged to have the same degree of abstraction and all writing was to be expository so that there was no variation in sentence structure because of the type of writing demanded.[12]

The directions for the preparation of the composition samples were given to the subjects in written form; no oral directions were used. The directions were given to the subjects at the hour of the assessment exercise. Each set of directions and the composition topic are included in Appendix B.

Each composition was prepared by the subjects in a 50-minute class period allotted for this exercise. The total length of the composition for each student approximated 200 words in length. For

[10]Braddock, p. 6.

[11]Braddock, p. 8.

[12]Braddock, p. 9.

structural analysis only the first 150 words of each paper were studied. After all of the tests were coded and arranged in random order, the two paper-analyzers, who had been trained for approximately 50 hours, recorded the various elements which appeared in each of the papers written by the students. The measurement chart which was used is included in Appendix D.

The two separate writing element-frequency consists, based on the two 150-word writing samples from the first two papers, were added to obtain the subject's pre-test score. The same procedure was used to obtain the subject's post-treatment score. A difference score was calculated for each student by subtracting the pre-treatment score from the post-treatment score obtained on the criterion measures: a positive difference representing a gain in the total number, or frequency, of sentence elements used in a written composition of controlled length; a negative difference representing a loss in this variable; the positive change representing maturity in use of sentence structures and a negative change, deterioration in the use of sentence structures.

Determining the Effectiveness of the Experimental Method

In the post-treatment on the criterion measure for the two treatment groups, the experimental, formed by pooling the ten classes taught by experimental procedure, and the control, formed by pooling the ten classes taught by traditional procedure, were compared using the t test appropriate for testing the significance of the difference between the means of independent groups.

The following formula was used to calculate the t value to test the significance of the difference between the means of the two treatment groups on the final evaluation using the criterion measure

$$t = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{\Sigma x_1^2 + \Sigma x_2^2}{N_1 + N_2 - 2}\right)\left(\frac{N_1 N_2}{N_1 N_2}\right)}}$$

standard error of the difference between means

$$\text{where} \quad \Sigma x^2 = \Sigma (\bar{X} - X)^2$$

$$\text{d.f.} = N_1 + N_2 - 2$$

An F ratio was formed using the variances of the two groups to determine if they were sufficiently homogeneous to satisfy the assumption of equality of variance which is necessary to a valid t test. The normality of the groups was determined by inspection; since it has been shown that even considerable departure from normality does not invalidate the t test, a formal test for normality of distribution was not applied to the data before calculating the t value.

This post-treatment status comparison of the two groups is deemed a sufficient comparative procedure to test the hypothesis concerning the differences between the groups accruing because of differential treatment effects, because of the randomization of initial differences through the sampling procedures used to constitute the treatment groups.

Evaluating the Changes in Maturity in Using Sentence Structures

The t test appropriate for testing the significance of the difference between the means of related groups was used to determine the significance of the change in maturity level of each treatment group.

The difference between the pre-treatment score and the post-treatment score on the criterion measure was tested for significance for both the control and experimental groups.

The following formula was used to obtain the t value where D is the subject difference score.

$$t = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{\sqrt{\frac{N\Sigma D^2 - (\Sigma D)^2}{N^2 (N - 1)}}} \qquad \text{d.f.} = (\text{pairs} - 1)$$

Evaluating the Amenability of the Experimental Procedure to Use by College Instructors

An analysis by instructor and treatment type was conducted to determine the number and indentity of instructors who induced positive mean differences (favoring the experimental group) between each of their two treatment groups. The instructors who were judged as cooperative with the study and who were able to assimilate the experimental procedure as a way of instructing their assigned experimental group were grouped together for comparison with those who were not so judged. The mean gain or change score for each instructor classification group was tested for significance using the t test appropriate group for related means. The differences between the mean final criterion assessments of the two treatment groups for each instructor group were tested for significance using the t test appropriate for independent means.

A further analysis of the differences of the instructor groups included a comparison of the two groups with respect to frequencies of change scores of the various magnitudes which each elicited from each of its treatment groups.

Chapter IV

Findings

A Comparison of Two Methods of Teaching Sentence Structure

Table II compares means and standard deviations for the two treatment groups on the pre- and post-treatment tests as well as the differences between pre- and post-treatment means.

TABLE II

COMPARISON OF TREATMENT GROUP MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND CHANGE SCORES ON A MEASURE OF SENTENCE MATURITY

	Treatment Group		Exp. -Cont.		
	Experimental (N=237)	Control (N=233)	Difference	t*(two-tail)p	
Pre-Treatment Mean	5.9957	5.9871	0.0086	-	-
Pre-Treatment S.D.	2.9519	2.6538			
Post-Treatment Mean	6.7342	6.3175	0.4167	1.495 (df=468)	<.20
Post-Treatment S.D.	3.2380	2.7722	-		
Post-Pre Change					
Mean	0.7385	0.3304	0.4081	-	-
S.D.	3.7763	3.5099			
t**	3.006 (df=236)	1.472 (df=232)	-	-	-
p (two-tail)	<.01	<.20			

*t test appropriate for independent means.
**t test appropriate for related means.

Table II shows the results that indicate that the post-treatment difference between means for the two groups taught by the different instructional methods is significant beyond the .20 level with the positive difference in favor of the experimental group.

A further examination of this table shows that the experimental group made positive gains from pre- to post-treatment measurement which were significant beyond the .01 level. The control group made smaller positive gains which were significant beyond the .20 level. (The reader is cautioned here against making a comparison between the gains of each group by comparing the magnitude of the t values associated with each change score.) It is apparent, however, that the mean gain score for the experimental group, 0.7385 gain sentence elements/300 words, is slightly more than two times the mean gain, 0.3304, of the control group.

The pre-treatment comparison of the two treatment groups was to satisfy the investigator that the randomization was effective with respect to the criterion measure. An inspection of the difference between the means of the two groups on the pre-treatment evaluation using the sentence maturity measure shows that there was very close agreement between the central tendencies of both groups. The differences in variability of the two groups are very slight as can be seen when the standard deviations of the two groups are compared.

The administration of the pre-test as a check on the effectiveness of randomization was secondary in importance to obtaining a basal sentence maturity level as measured by the criterion assessment procedure.

A study of the actual gains by the experimental group seemed necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of procedure in causing students to mature in the use of sentence structures by using a greater number of elements in a controlled writing sample. It was further necessary, in order to evaluate this change, to obtain an empirical estimate of the changes, with respect to the criterion measure, that accrued in the

control group subjected to a different treatment over a similar period of time.

A concern was also expressed not just for the comparison of the two groups on average criterion score and the intra-group gains but likewise for the numbers of students in each group who demonstrated positive, null, and negative change in sentence maturity as a result of instruction as measured by the criterion procedure. This information is presented in summary form in Table III. The frequency distributions and change scores for the experimental and control groups are presented in Appendix C.

TABLE III

A SUMMARIZED DISTRIBUTION OF SUBJECT CHANGES
OVER TREATMENT PERIOD ON THE SENTENCE MATURITY MEASURE

Group		Maturity Measure Change Score: loss negative (-) 6 or more	5	4	3	2	1	0	gain positive (+) 1	2	3	4	5	6 or more	Total
Experimental (N = 237)	n.	12	6	12	16	18	22	24	24	26	22	14	14	27	237
	%	5.1	2.4	5.1	6.8	7.6	9.3	10.1	10.1	11.0	9.3	5.9	5.9	11.4	100.0%
	cum % from 0 change	36.3	31.2	28.8	23.7	16.9	9.3	0.0	10.1	21.1	30.4	36.3	42.2	53.6	-
		46.4%							53.6%						
Control (N = 233)	n	9	9	11	19	19	20	38	26	28	15	16	10	13	233
	%	3.8	3.8	4.7	8.2	8.2	8.6	16.3	11.2	12.0	6.4	6.9	4.3	5.6	100.0%
	cum % from 0 change	37.3	33.5	29.7	25.0	16.8	8.6	0.0	11.2	23.2	29.6	36.5	40.8	46.4	-
		53.6%							46.4%						

In Table III, a highly coincidental finding is reported: that 46.4% of the experimental group either made no gain or regressed in sentence maturity over the instructional period. The same percentage of the control group made positive gains over the same period of time under a different instructional procedure. From the experimental group, 53.6% made positive gains while an identical percentage of the control group either made no gain or accrued a loss on the criterion measure.

The Acceptability of the Experimental Method by Instructors

A somewhat questionable procedure from an ethical scientific and statistical point of view was used to study the amenability of this procedure to general practice application.

The investigator made, ex post facto, an indentification (to a large degree arbitrary but also based on the data) of six of the ten instructors as teachers who had been cooperative and at least moderately successful in administering both of the treatments. Though it is probably true that the use of a selected group loads the treatment comparison in favor of the experimental method, it was not ambitious in doing so. Table IV describes and classifies each instructor with respect to the number of subjects changed in the direction of the change within each treatment group. Group A includes the six instructors subjectively considered to be cooperative and successful users of both the experimental and control methods. Group B includes four instructors, one judged as somewhat unsuccessful and to a certain extent uncooperative and three who contaminated their control sections by administering to them parts of the experimental treatment.

TABLE IV
DISTRIBUTION OF CHANGES IN SENTENCE MATURITY
ACCORDING TO INSTRUCTOR CLASSIFICATION

Group A			
		Treatment	
Instructor	Change	Experimental	Control
1	+	27	8
	-	8	7
	0	5	2
2	+	15	22
	-	5	15
	0	2	6
3	+	13	8
	-	7	8
	0	2	7
4	+	15	11
	-	5	9
	0	1	3
5	+	9	7
	-	12	7
	0	2	6
6	+	10	7
	-	9	8
	0	3	6
Sub group total	+	89	63
	-	45	54
	0	15	30
		Group B	
7	+	11	11
	-	8	10
	0	2	2
8	+	14	15
	-	7	7
	0	2	0
9	+	7	10
	-	13	7
	0	3	5
10	+	6	9
	-	13	9
	0	2	1
Sub group total	+	38	45
	-	41	33
	0	9	8
TOTAL	+	127	108
	-	86	87
	0	24	38
	Total	237	233

The reorganization of data concerning changes in the students' sentence maturity according to instructor classification (Table IV) shows some very interesting results. Group A, consisting of six instructors, judged by the investigator to be able to assimilate themselves to the use of the experimental procedure, produced almost twice as many positive changes as negative changes in the experimental group, while with their control groups they produced 63 positive changes as opposed to 54 negative. These instructors also had about one-half as many static students, those with no change, in the experimental group as they had in their control groups.

For the B group of teachers, those who were not able to adjust to the experimental situation, the number of gains and losses in their experimental groups was very nearly equal. They were able to make 12 more changes in the control group than in their experimental groups with the numbers of static students in each being about equal.

A comparison of the performance of the students on the final criterion test according to instructor classification category is presented in Table V.

TABLE V

COMPARISON OF STUDENTS ON A MEASURE OF SENTENCE MATURITY WHEN GROUPED ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF INSTRUCTOR ASSIMILATION OF PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

Instructor Group		Treatment Group: Experimental	Treatment Group: Control	Mean Diff Exp-Cont	t (two tail)	p
A (Cooperative & Assimilated)	Mean	6.9732	6.2973	0.6759	2.000 (df=295)	< .05
	S.D.	3.1321	2.6571			
	n	149	148			
B (Uncooperative & Not Assimilated)	Mean	6.3068	6.3529	-0.0461	none*	N.S.
	S.D.	3.4130	2.9614		(df=191)	
	n	88	85			
	Mean Diff (A-B)	0.6664	-0.0556	.7220		
Total	n	237	233			
	t (two tail)	1.524 (df=235)	None* (df=231)			
	p	< .20	N.S.			

*Note--no t value was calculated when observed difference is extremely small

From Table V it can be seen that the mean differences which accrued in favor of the experimental group over their control counterparts for the Group A instructors were positive in direction and significant beyond the .05 level. (Caution: Consider the level of confidence an overestimate of the true significance level because of bias in the statistic referred to the t distribution because of the selection of the large differences for testing.)

The differences in means between the experimental groups of each of the instructor group was positive in favor of the Group A instructors and significant beyond the .20 level.

No differences of any consequence resulted between the instructor groups on the control group's performance.

For the Group B instructors the performance of their control and experimental groups was very similar.

It must be mentioned here that from Table V we see that the instructors in Group A did not obtain as high an average performance from their control group as did the Group B instructors in either of their two treatment groups. This suggests suppressing some of the importance attached to the difference between the experimental and control groups that accrued under the Group A instructors (or it may reflect the extent of the contamination of the control group by either instructors or inter-group student contact).

Chapter V

Conclusions

The following conclusions have been drawn from the results of the study which were presented in the preceding chapter:

1. A program of consistent self-analysis of sentence structure can increase the frequency with which a variety of elements are used in written composition by college freshmen.
   a. The increase in the sentence elements, variety obtained through the experimental method of instruction, is only moderately significant statistically in comparison with the changes effected as a result of traditional instruction.
2. The experimental procedure of teaching sentence structure seemed to be a useful and effective instructional method to slightly more than 50% of college English instructors who teach courses in freshman composition.
   a. The group of instructors who seemed to assimilate this method as a valid teaching procedure developed significantly higher average levels of sentence maturity in their students when they used this procedure than when they used a more traditional procedure.
   b. Those teachers who were judged to be unable to use the new method with maximum effectiveness elicited average sentence maturity levels of similar magnitude from both treatment groups in their charge. Neither of these, however, were as high as the level obtained by the teachers who employed the experimental method successfully.
3. One must arrive at the following conclusion when seeing the high percentage of students who either make no gain in the use of sentence elements, or in fact deteriorate under instruction: Attempts to create a general improvement in the writing skill of college students have been very unsuccessful. Although the experimental procedure used in this study

reduced this percentage in relation to the proportion found as a result of a more traditional method, it still remains alarmingly high, as high as 46%.

4. Finally it seems fitting to conclude that there is a real possibility that the criterion measure for assessing sentence maturity is too gross a measure to differentiate between college freshmen. It is also likely that it is not sensitive enough to detect changes in sentence structure over an instructional period so short as one semester. (One year was the period used in the pilot study.)

Chapter VI

Implications for Further Study

1. One of the most significant implications of the study concerns the high number of students who either make no gain in the use of sentence elements or who actually deteriorate under instruction. It is believed that this is a fair evaluation of the effect of the traditional method of teaching composition on student writing. The cause of this regression seems to be the method of paper marking. A specific method of marking papers was designed to prevent this negative response in that it provides for the transfer of the knowledge about sentence structure gained from the observation process to writing. However, the critical importance of the paper marking was not fully recognized until the results of the study were analyzed. Therefore, this part of the procedure was not sufficiently emphasized in the administration of the study. This factor needs additional study because it may provide a clue to the general ineffectiveness of the teaching of composition.
2. A second implication of the study concerns the preparation of teachers to use the method. The assumption was made that the teachers could be oriented while using the method. However, an analysis of the results shows that a preliminary training period--perhaps a one-week workshop--would prepare the teachers to use the method, especially the paper marking.
3. Another factor which requires additional study is the measurement chart, which records the number of introductory elements, interrupting elements, afterthoughts, and parallel elements used in writing. While the papers were being analyzed, it became clear that introductory prepositional phrases and introductory adverbial clauses were unreliable in calculating the student's sentence maturity because these were used freely both before and after the teaching. It seemed that the growth would be measured more accurately by omitting these from the measuring instrument.

4. A final by-product of the study, important to the freshman English staff at Kansas State College, was the effect on teacher attitude. The teachers reported that the method took less time and effort and that the student reaction to it was positive. As a result of their participation in the study, the teachers are exploring new methods in other phases of the teaching of freshman English. A number of them used voluntarily the experimental method of teaching sentence structure during the second semester.
5. It may also be important to note that the ten teachers involved in this study comprise a cross section of those engaged in the teaching of English, providing a wide range of age, experience, and qualifications. Group A included teachers with little or no experience, as well as teachers with considerable experience. No attempt was made to select only specially trained teachers for this study.

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APPENDIX A: Directions given to teachers

Summary of the Use of Commas As Developed from Observation
(With the Identifying Numbers)

1. Introductory Element: Use a comma after a modifying element which is placed <u>before</u> the subject-verb of the sentence to help the reader identify the subject and verb--the vital part of the sentence--more quickly.

2. Interrupting Element: Use <u>two</u> commas to enclose a modifying element which is used to interrupt the main part of the sentence--subject-verb--to tell the reader that the writer is digressing.

3. Afterthought: Use a comma when an added fact is placed <u>after</u> the subject-verb.

4. Coordinate Clauses: Use a comma between <u>two</u> <u>equal</u> subject-verb series (compound sentence).

5. Series: Use commas between members of a series (3 or more) composed of words, phrases, or clauses.
(GENERAL PRINCIPLE OF PARALLEL STRUCTURE in language: Equal ideas are expressed in equal form.)

6. Series of adjectives or adverbs which are used to modify the same noun, verb, or adverb. (This is parallel structure.)

Explanation of the use of these principles:

The efficient way to improve reading and writing is to observe--really see--how writers use sentence structure to express meaning (or subtle emphasis) to the thought which the words carry, or to observe the meaning expressed by the structure itself.

A simple way to recognize the meaning of the structures is to look at the sentences of professional writers within this frame. As one observes the relationship between sentence elements and the punctuation used to signal to the reader the particular arrangement of these which the writer is using, the purpose and the meaning of the structure becomes clear.

The last step is then also a simple one: the transfer of this knowledge to the writing of one's own sentences.

APPENDIX A: Explanation of the problems

The problem, in each case, is to observe the effect an author achieves through his use of punctuation and arrangement of sentence elements. He may use punctuation in an unconventional way, but if he knows his business, the unconventionality, interpreted by the reader in the frame of the conventional, has an effect in the reader's mind which the author wants.

The problem for the student is to decide why the author uses punctuation as he does. To do this the student must think: this is the objective. The method will not be successful unless the student really searches for the answer: what does the punctuation mean? We assume the writer knows what he is doing. Then we ask what he is attempting to communicate.

The student should use a question mark directly above the comma (colon, semicolon, etc.) whenever he feels that there is some question about the reason for its use.

APPENDIX A: Sample problem

Indicate, by placing the appropriate number directly above each comma in the following sentences, the reason for the author's use of each comma. Use a question mark for any punctuation which calls for discussion.

1. Introductory
2. Interrupter
3. Afterthought
4. Coordinate Clauses
5. Series
6. Equal modifiers
?. Use when uncertain

"Writers differ,[3] of course,[4] but in general we may say that there are two processes in creative writing. In the first,[1] the writer is more or less excited,[?] and tries to put down as clearly as possible the thing that is exciting him. In the second,[1] he returns to what he has written,[?] and reads it coldly and critically,[3] trying to see it as if somebody else had written it.

"The two processes are quite separate . . . ." L. A. G. Strong, English for Pleasure (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1951), pp. 94-95.

"The professional writer is not troubling his head about the way in which other people write. He finds quite enough to do in trying to write his own way.

"All the same,[1] however original his own way of writing may be,[1] he DOES keep certain rules,[3] if only by instinct. He keeps them because,[2] if he did not,[2] people would find difficulty in understanding what he was trying to say." Strong, p. 40.

"In the same way,[1] when we are writing,[1] we observe and keep certain conventions,[3] which,[2] like the rules of the road,[2] make things easier for our readers . . . . Grammar is not a body of dead rules,[3] a sort of iron frame into which the English is pushed whether it likes it or not. It is a living thing,[3] part of the language." Strong, p. 47.

APPENDIX A: Sample problem

Parallel Structure:

A device used by the writer to show that ideas are equal in value. As readers, we automatically know that ideas expressed in equal form are equal in value in the writer's mind.

Using parallel lines in form <u>exactly like the sample</u>, show how and where the author has used parallel structure.

The White House Revisited

Parallelism		Structure
by the	spirit and color	object of preposition

"It is a house still possessed by the spirit and color of a man no longer there. The main desk is now occupied by a man substantial and able in his own right,[4] yet there is a sense in the house of a persisting presence[3]--inescapable,[5] palpable,[5] pervasive. Beyond the many physical evidences is an unmistakable suffusion,[3] a sort of lingering electrical energy generated by the young President. He didn't just reside in or preside over the big house;[4] he filled it[2]--quite literally[2]--with a special quality of aliveness. And the charge is still in the air."

Norman Cousins, <u>Saturday Review</u> (Feb. 8, 1964) Editorial Page.

APPENDIX B

First Pre-Test

Write an essay of approximately two pages telling about your reading experience. The following questions may help you to decide what you need to say about your reading. They are not to be answered directly. After reading the questions, decide what you want to tell about your reading, organize what you plan to say, and then write. Say what you really think. Do not try to say what you think you are expected to say.

Place ONLY your ID number in the upper right hand corner of each page of your essay. Then fill out the 3 x 5 card provided by your instructor and return it with your essay.

How do you feel about reading? Explain.
How much reading have you done? Give specific materials.
When you read, what do you read? Be specific.
If you do not read, WHY don't you read? What do you do with your time which keeps you from reading?
Is reading worthwhile for you? Why? Or why not?
What types of books do you read? Name titles for examples.
How can the skill of reading play a role in your day-by-day life?

Second Pre-Test

Write an essay of approximately two pages telling about your writing experience. The following questions may help you to decide what you need to say about your writing. They are not to be answered directly. After reading the questions, decide what you want to tell about your writing, organize what you plan to say, and then write. Say what you really think. Do not try to say what you think you are expected to say.

Place ONLY your ID number in the upper right hand corner of each page of your essay.

How much writing have you done? Explain.
If you write at all, what do you like to write about? Be specific.
If you do not like to write, try to explain why. Give details.
How can the skill of writing play a role in your day-by-day life?

APPENDIX B

First Post-Test

Write an essay of at least two pages telling about your writing experiences this semester. The following questions may help you to decide what you need to say about your writing. These questions are not to be answered directly: after reading the questions, decide what you want to say about your writing, organize what you plan to say, and then write using specific examples to prove your points. Say what you really think. Do not try to say what you think you are expected to say.

Use standard communication theme paper.

Place ONLY your ID number in the upper right hand corner of each page of your essay.

Have you changed your attitude about writing in any way this semester? Explain.
Do you write more easily than you did in September?
Have you learned to organize what you wish to say before you write? Has this helped you to write?
Do you find your mistakes more easily than you did?

Second Post-Test

Write an essay of at least two pages discussing your reading experiences this semester. The following questions may help you to decide what you need to say about your reading. These questions are not to be answered directly: after reading the questions, decide what you want to say about your reading, organize what you plan to say, and then write, using specific examples to prove your points. Say what you really think. Do not try to say what you think you are expected to say. Readers want to know what you really gained or failed to gain from your reading this semester.

Use standard communication theme paper.

Place ONLY your ID number in the upper right hand corner of each page of your essay.

How do you feel about reading? Explain.
Were the selections read valuable in some way for you? How?
Did you find these interesting? Which ones? In what way?
Did you form your own opinions about these selections?

APPENDIX C

DISTRIBUTIONS OF SCORES BY TREATMENT GROUP A MEASURE OF SENTENCE MATURITY FOR KANSAS STATE COLLEGE STUDENTS

Score	Pre Test f		Post Test f		Score	Change f	
	Exp.	Cont.	Exp.	Cont.		Exp.	Cont.
17			2		+12		1
16	2		0		+11		0
15	1		2	1	+10		3
14	2	3	6	1	+ 9	1	1
13	1	1	2	2	+ 8	7	1
12	6	5	5	5	+ 7	5	5
11	5	6	12	10	+ 6	14	2
10	11	10	15	11	+ 5	14	10
9	18	12	20	21	+ 4	14	16
8	18	21	30	23	+ 3	22	15
7	24	29	20	34	+ 2	26	28
6	37	36		26	+ 1	24	26
5	31	39		31	0	24	38
4	35	35		33	- 1	22	20
3	21	19		22	- 2	18	19
2	17	12		4	- 3	16	19
1	8	3		9	- 4	12	11
0	0	2		0	- 5	6	9
					- 6	5	2
					- 7	0	3
					- 8	2	3
					- 9	3	1
					-10	2	0
Total	237	233	237	233		237	233
Mean	5.9957	5.9871	6.7342	6.3175		0.7385	0.3304
S.D.	2.9519	2.6538	3.2380	2.7722		3.7763	3.5099

APPENDIX D

SCORE 11 (number of elements used)
108 (number of words of writing)

THE MEASUREMENT CHART

Marks indicate the charting of the sample paragraph
Measurement of Skill in Using Knowledge of Sentence Structure

Sentence Elements	Inverted	Introductory	Interrupter	Afterthought	Parallel Structure
Subject - verb					111
Prepositional phrase		1			
Infinitive phrase					
Participial phrase				1	
Gerund phrase					
Adjective clause					
Noun clause					1
Adverb clause		111	11		
Other					

This scale used periodically be the teacher on the students' writing should

1. show growth in skill of manipulating sentence structures and
2. enable the teacher to help the student use elements effectively in order to achieve variety of structure.

APPENDIX D

SCORE _____(No. of elements used)
(No. of words counted)

STANDARD OF CHECKING FOR MEASUREMENT

1. Do not mark compound subjects, verbs, or clauses.
2. Mark in each case the most sophisticated element.
3. Give 2 marks only when two elements are actually present. Do not count the same element twice.

Sentence Elements	Inverted	Introductory	Interrupter	Afterthought	Parallel Structure
Subject - verb	Inversions show sophistication in style.				Three only (not 2) or more
Prepositional phrase		Omit routine ineffective expressions. Transitional phrases should be marked regardless of punctuation.	Omit trite ineffectual phrases. Student punctuation not reliable.	Do not count, even when punct., unless these are added	Count even with only 1 preposition.
Infinitive phrase					
Participial phrase		Count nominative absolutes here.			
Gerund phrase		Count here when gerund is object of a preposition.			
Adjective clause			Count only when non-restrictive, in spite of punctuation.	Count only when non-restrictive, in spite of punctuation.	
Noun clause			Appositive only	Appositive only	Count even though conjunction is not repeated.
Adverb clause		Count even though punctuation is missing.	Count even though punctuation is not present.	Count only when really added, in spite of punctuation.	Count even though conj. is not repeated.
Other For all elements which cannot be clearly identified.			Appositive plus prepositional phrase, participle or clause.		

(Any element counted here must be reasonably complicated.) Do not count a simple appositive.
Count only appositives which are modified by some other element.